

THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A coffee tablet having

5 a three-dimensional shape with a smooth outer surface with a closed surface pore structure and

an internal pore structure wherein a majority of the pores in the internal pore structure are interconnected and have a size of between 5 and 50 micrometers,

10 which coffee tablet comprising coffee solids therein and the tablet being of a size sufficient to prepare a coffee beverage when one or more are added to an appropriate amount of hot water.

2. The coffee tablet of claim 1 wherein the shape is a disc or polygon or coffee bean, and the smooth outer surface is obtained by molding a coffee composition that contains coffee solids in a smooth or polished mold.

15 3. The coffee tablet of claim 2, wherein the smooth outer surface is obtained by compression molding of the coffee composition.

4. The coffee tablet of claim 2, wherein the smooth outer surface is obtained by partially freezing the coffee composition into a slush, molding the partially frozen slush to form the three-dimensional shape; and coating the shape with coffee.

20 5. The coffee tablet of claim 4 wherein coating is provided by immersing the frozen three dimensional shape into a concentrated coffee extract at a temperature range of between -5 to 20 °C with the liquid coffee extract having a concentration of between 30 and 60 % coffee.

25 6. The coffee tablet of claim 2, wherein a gas is introduced into the coffee composition before it is introduced into the mold to create the pore structure.

7. The coffee tablet of claim 1, wherein a coffee aroma is present adjacent the tablet to retain flavor and aroma during storage.

8. The coffee tablet of claim 1, wherein a flavorant, a colorant or an additional aroma is associated with the tablet.

9. The coffee tablet of claim 8, wherein the flavorant, colorant or additional 5 aroma is provided in a coating on the tablet.

10. A coffee tablet according to any of the claims 1 to 11, the coffee tablet having an overall porosity in the range of 50 to 80% and density in the range of 800 to 300 g/l.

10 11. A packaged coffee product comprising at least one coffee tablet of according to any of claims 1 to 10, a package of a moisture resistant material for containing the at least one tablet therein, and a coffee aroma present in the package in an amount sufficient to retain the flavor and aroma of the coffee tablet.

15 12. The product of claim 11, wherein the aroma is coffee aroma that contains aromatic volatiles and between 1 and 8 tablets are present in the package.

13. The product of claims 11 or 12, wherein the package material comprises a flexible laminate having at least two layers, which material is substantially impervious to 20 permeation by gas or moisture and the coffee tablet(s) are sealed therein.

14. The product of claims 11, 12 or 13, wherein the layers of the flexible laminate packaging material comprise paper or a plastic film, optionally including a metallized surface.

25 15. A method for forming a coffee tablet for preparing a coffee beverage when added to an appropriate amount of hot water, which comprises molding a coffee composition that contains coffee solids while adding a gas thereto to form a coffee tablet having a three-dimensional shape that conforms to that of the mold and that has a smooth 30 outer surface and a closed surface pore structure, wherein the amount of gas added to the coffee composition is sufficient to form a internal pore structure, with a majority of the pores in the pore structure are interconnected and have a size of between 5 and 50 micrometers.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the mold has a cavity that provides the shape of a disc or polygon or that imitates a coffee bean.

5 17. The method of claims 15 or 16, wherein the smooth outer surface is obtained by freezing the coffee composition in the mold.

18. The method of claim 15 or 16, wherein the smooth outer surface is obtained by compression molding of the coffee composition in the mold.

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19. The method of claim 15, wherein the smooth outer surface is obtained by partially freezing the coffee composition into a slush, molding the partially frozen slush to form the three-dimensional shape; and coating the shape with coffee.

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20. The method of claim 19, wherein the coating is provided by immersing the frozen three dimensional shape into a concentrated coffee extract at a temperature range of between -5 to 20 °C. with the liquid coffee extract having a concentration of between 30 and 60 % coffee.

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21. The method of any of claims 15 to 20 which further comprises providing a coffee aroma adjacent the tablet to retain flavor and aroma of the tablet during storage.

22. The method of any of claims 15 to 21, which further comprises associating a flavorant, a colorant or an additional aroma with the tablet.

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23. The method of claim 22, wherein the flavorant, colorant or additional aroma is provided in a coating on the tablet.

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24. The method of claim 15 which further comprises providing a packaged coffee product by placing at least one coffee tablet in a package of a moisture resistant material.

25. The method of claim 24 which further comprises providing a coffee aroma in the package in an amount sufficient to retain the flavor and aroma of the coffee tablet during storage in the package.

5 26. The method of claim 25 wherein the aroma is coffee aroma that contains aromatic volatiles and between 1 and 8 tablets are present in the package.

10 27. The method of claim 24, wherein the package material comprises a flexible laminate having at least two layers, which material is substantially impervious to permeation by gas or moisture and the coffee tablet(s) are sealed therein.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the layers of the flexible laminate packaging material comprise paper or a plastic film, optionally including a metallized surface.

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29. A coffee tablet produced by the method any of claims 15 to 28.